

*Something in Answer to Thomas Curtis and  
B. C's Reasons why the Meeting-House  
Doors were shut up at Reading.*

*Friendly Reader,*

**F**inding of late a Printed Paper spread abroad, in City and Country, with the Name of *Thomas Curtis* to the first part of it, and *B. C.* to the latter; wherein one of them pretends to give an account of the grounds upon which he intended to shut up the Publick Meeting-House Door, of the People called Quakers in *Reading*, and the other endeavours by certain Reasons to justify and defend the doing thereof; We held our selves engaged in Christian duty to give an Answer thereto, for the Clearing of the Truth we profess, Vindicating our selves in the profession thereof, and Undeceiving all such as through the false Insinuations in the said Paper either already are, or may be in danger to be deceived thereby.

The Paper says, *It is publicly known in this Town (Reading) that a Difference is amongst the People call'd Quakers, as very frequently at our publick Meeting-House doth appear, to the dishonour of Almighty God, stumbling of the Weak, and grief of many tender hearted, that W. L. I. B. &c. do from time to time stir up Strife, by endeavouring the defamation of their ancient Friends, rendering them to be departed from their first Principles, &c.*

To which we answer in Truth and Plainness, that what *T. C.* doth here charge upon us is indeed that which they themselves are guilty of, for it is too well known, that many Scandalous and Reproachful Books and Papers, have of late Years been Written, and Published in Print to the World by some of their party (as namely *W. Rogers, F. Bugg, Tho. Crisp, S. Aldridge*) greatly tending to the defamation of our ancient Friends in Truth, and rendering them to be departed from their first Principles, &c. This is too plain to be denyed, their Books and Papers being in Print, to be seen, and *T. C.* and others of party with him, being in too great measure gone into, & joyned with the same evil spirit of defamation, as those opposers of Friends and Truth are in,

have received, owned, dispersed or spread abroad those Books and Papers or some of them, of which we have often with grief complained to them, before we appeared in that Testimony against them, of keeping on our Hats (which so much disturbs them) but could obtain no satisfaction from them, although we plainly declared unto them, that if they continued in that spirit of Division, and to own and spread those ungodly scandalous Books, we should be necessitated to disown their Testimonies in our Meetings; so that indeed and in truth it is they that have endeavoured to defame the ancient Friends of Truth (and that publickly in Print) rendering them to be departed from their first Principles; it is they that in thus doing have stirred up Strife to the dishonour of Almighty God, stumbling of the Weak, and grief of many tender hearted, and this before we appeared in that Testimony of keeping on our Hats at their Prayers, whereby we think it evidently appears that it is they that have caused the Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine which we have learned; and since the Apostle plainly says (as in their Paper is recited) *They that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* We think it concerns them well to consider what ground they now have to claim a right to a part of the Ministry of Christ Jesus our Lord, since none that do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ can have a right to a part of his Ministry. And whereas their Paper intimates, *As if we had denied that it is fit they should acknowledge to Almighty God in the Congregations of his people those Mercies and Blessings that he is graciously pleased from time to time to bestow on them, &c.*

We answer that in the wording of this Passage they have rather used Art to beguile the Reader, then Plainness to set forth the true state of the matter, for as they have expressed it, some may be misled to think that we are against acknowledging to Almighty God in the Congregations of his people the Mercies and Blessings by him bestowed, and supplicating at the Throne of his Grace for a future supply; whereas indeed we believe, and hold that every one that is right sensible of the Mercies and Benefits received from God, and of his own Inability, ought in that sense, and in the moving of the holy Spirit, to make such acknowledgments and supplications; yet we plainly declare we hold it not fit for any who are gone out from the Unity and Communion of Gods people, and have publickly defamed and disowned them as *Apostatates* and *Innovators* (which those have done the faithful Friends of Truth) to take upon them to make any such Acknowledgments, or put

up any such Supplications in the Congregations of Gods people, as the mouth, or in the name and behalf of those Congregations which such are gone out of the unity of; & when any such do take upon themselves to do, we do not believe there is any obligation upon those Congregations of Gods people, or any Members thereof, to joyn in outward appearance with such who in Spirit are departed from the fellowship of the Gospel of Christ. Jesus, but rather that such an outward compliance with that which in Spirit they have not unity with (but the contrary) would be but an effect of Hypocrisie and Deceit, for T. C. said to I. B. (before the Meeting-House door was shut up) *That the Difference between them and us (meaning Friends) was not only in outward things, but it was now in the heart and spirit.*

Having thus endeavoured to clear some passages wherein we and our Friends have been mis-represented, we now proceed to the rest of the Paper, and first we take notice that the reason given for the publishing their Paper is, *That a Copy of it was read publicly in the Meeting, and there tendered to some of them that were concerned, but they would not take it.* To which we answer, that this is also unfairly represented; for tho it be true, that the Copy of that Paper (or some such) was read, and tendered in the Meeting, and not then received, not thinking fit at that time to meddle with it, our Spirits being then engaged in the worship and service of God, which B. C. in the second reason of their Paper says, *Ought to be performed with great Seriousness and Reverence;* yet since some of us concerned did within the time in their said Paper perfixe go to them to ask for the said Copy, but were denyed to have it, and one of them put off with Flouts, we think the not taking it at that instant, when it was tendered (to divert us from the great Seriousness and Reverence which the Worship and Service of God (Friends were then engaged in) ought to be performed with) can by no means be admitted for a plain and just ground of putting it and us in Print.

And whereas T. C. pretends in his Paper to a Power and Authority of shutting up our Meeting-House door, and keeping us out there, upon the score of his being the chief Proprietor, as he is pleased to call himself, and B. C. also calls him; we answer we know not upon what just ground he or any other of the Proprietors, should claim a superiority, or chiefship of propriety in the Meeting-House, which was Built by common consent and agreement (tho B. C. in his fourth reason saith, without distinction, T. C. Built it) and at the common charge of the Friends of Reading, and other places, with what came out of the publick

publick Stock and Rents, for if in common and publick Works and Services joyntly undertaken & performed by any Christian Society or People for their common and publick Christian use, & so declared and settled by and amongst them, the greatest Contributor should afterwards challenge to himself a power and right of disposing the whole; this were indeed a ready way to introduce a Gentile like Lordship and Usurpation over one another, but would be altogether unlike the Disciples and Followers of Jesus; but if T.C. did repute himself the chief Proprietor upon the account of his being the largest Contributor, yet since he well knows, that after the Meeting-House was Built and Finished, he did (because the Lease of the Ground whereon it was Built was taken in his Name) pass over and legally convey his particular and personal Right and Property therein to certain Friends in Trust, then agreed on by the whole, to receive and keep the same for the whole, he might both in Reason and Modesty have foreborn now to stile himself the chief Proprietor, and much more from taking upon him as such, to shut up the Meeting-House door, and keep others of the Proprietors out, his telling the Justices that he was chief Proprietor doth not make him so, no more then it did regain the House from the Souldiers that had entered into it; and if it had never been regained, the loss had been occasioned by him, and his adherence, inasmuch as that Meeting for which the House was seized on, was set up by them, without and against the Consent and Unity of Friends. And whereas *He bids the Impartial Reader judge whether in Reason and Equity he ought to look upon himself engaged to hazard his Estate to pay Fines for a Meeting-House, for such as publickly do disown him and his Friends.* We say, that although some of us have been fined because of the Preaching of some of them who disowned us, yet we never desired T.C. or any other particular of them should hazard their Estates on our accounts; if T.C. exposed himself or Estate to any hazard in that respect, it was his own doing, neither desired consented to, nor approved of by us, yet we offered to secure him from any danger that should come upon him, if he left the Meeting-House to us. To his offer of reimbursing any that were dissatisfied because of their having disburs't some Money on the Premises, &c. We say we had not freedom to receive the Money again which we had freely giving and devoted to that Service, knowing that we had given it with an upright and conscientious regard to God, neither were we willing to consent to, or help forward the Separation, which we saw was designed and intended

intended thereby, yet because we saw some of them uneasy, and to take off from them all occasions of Complaint, that they might see we desired not to enjoy what they had any Share or Interest in against their minds without making allowance to them; therefore we did offer to make them reasonable Satisfaction for what Money they had laid down upon the Premises, & we saw not, nor yet see any just ground they have to expect that we should be more obliged to part with our Interest than they with theirs; therefore in truth of Heart and plainness of Speech we do sincerely declare, that we do believe *Tho. Curtis* hath no right nor just power in Equity, or in Law to do as he hath done, in shutting up the Meeting-House Doors, and keeping out those that both in Law and Equity have a right thereto: That the Propositions he mentions in his Paper are Arbitrary and Penal, Arbitrary because they depend only upon his and other mens Wills and Humours without Right and Reason; for what Right or Reason can he pretend for tying us to give him our Answer to this Paper of his by next 6th. day at farthest, after he had caused it to be Read amongst us on the first day before, or to bind us to claim our Money in one Months time: And that it is Penal appears in this, that in case his Proposals were not complied with, he declared in his Paper he did intend to fasten up the Doors, as he did accordingly, for on the 7th. day following the 6th. day *B. C.* came to *W. L.* and *J. B.* and told them *That if they had any thing to offer for Reconciliation they might come, but W. L. came not, so the Doors that Evening were fastened up;* says *B. C.* in his 9th. Reason, but in this as in other parts he writes unfairly, stating it as if the reason of their shutting up the Doors that evening was because *W. L.* came not, &c. whereas *W. L.* being hindred by necessary occasions desired *J. B.* to go, who accordingly did go, and offered such terms both in his own and *W. L.* Name as they in Truth judged most expedient for a right Reconciliation.

And that the Reader may see how ready we have been to comply with any reasonable and just Proposals for a right Reconciliation, (however we have been misrepresented in that respect) we will here for brevity give one particular Instance, and leave it to the Impartial Readers Judgment; In the first Month 1685, 86. *J. O.* a Friend of *London* (an ancient Acquaintance both of theirs and ours) came to this Town, and desired, and had a Meeting with *T. C.* and some others of those that shut us out of the Meeting-House, and some of us that were shut out, where he signified to both them and us, that the Friends

of.

*London* having heard that they had shut up the Meeting-House doors, whereby Truth might suffer, and Friends were kept out, and exposed to the Cold and Rain, and were very much concerned about it, and had desired him to enquire the Reasons of it; and when the Reasons they gave (being mostly such as *B. C.* hath now Published) were not Satisfactory to *J. O.* he proposed several ways to them and us jointly to refer the matter to some Friends to be Indifferently chosen on both Parties, to decide the matter between us, which we willingly agreed to, but they refused. By which the honest Reader may judge how little sincerity there is in all their talk of terms of Reconciliation, Accommodation, &c. who had set up their own wills for a Law, and would admit no Judges but themselves in their own Cause.

As for *B. C.*'s Reasons, although being much of the same nature with *T. C.*'s part of the Paper, they either deserve no Answer, or no other than what is already giving to that, yet to take from him all pretence of Boasting that he is not particularly Answered, we shall here annex the Answer that was some time ago sent him by another Friend in writing, while they were only in writing, which notwithstanding the Alterations *B. C.* hath since made in some of his Reasons, will yet, we do not doubt appear, to be a sufficient Answer to them.

Reading the 4th. of the }  
4th Month 1686. }

*William Lamboll, John Bay,*  
and the rest concerned.

*This to go in pursuance of the Paper it is an Answer to.*

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Postscript

## Postscript to the Reader.

**T**Hese things are not pleasant to us, but rather a grief that we have cause on this wise to appear in Publick upon such a Subject, especially, against them who were once our Friends and Familiars, that we must cry out against them as Job did against his Friends (who oft spoke good words, as these may do) yet said he, *Behold, I cry out of Wrong, but I am not heard, I cry aloud, but there is no Judgment*: So that notwithstanding their good words, their Ear was shut to the cry of the Wronged, & though he cried aloud, there was no Judgment; & now may not we well thus complain, who are kept out of our Right (which we have called for) and our Bodies exposed to the Weather, to the great hazard of our Healths, and endangering of our Lives, yet our cry of wrong cannot be heard, and tho we cry aloud there is no Judgment. Oh that it should be thus with any professing the equal Truth to do (in some measure) too like *Ahab*, who did not cover, and presently take, but proffered first a better Vinyard ther it, or would have given *Naboth* the worth of it in Money; but when this would not do, the Woman *Jezabel* contrives or lays a Plot against *Naboth*, through whose crafty Means & subtil Contrivances, Innocent & Conscientious *Naboth*, who scrupled to sell the Inheritance of his Father, was deprived of his Life and Vinyard too, and as we are now deprived of our Property, so may we be of our Lives, by reason of the hardships we are exposed too, if the Lord by his power and goodness doth not preserve us, who have been Conscientiously concerned not to let go our Right, and give way to that which is Wrong, as *Naboth* was.

And what shall we say to such, but as *Paul* to the *Corinthians*, see 1 Cor. 6. 5. *Is there not a wise man among you, no not one, that you may be able to Judge, that you refuse a Reference; if so, then follow Paul's Advice* (if ye account your selves of Christs Church) and set them that are least esteemed in the Church to Judge; for said *Paul*, *There is utterly a fault among you; for you Wrong and Defraud, and that your Brethren*. So that it appears there were some such that were Cloaked under the name of Christians, and yet did Wrong and Defraud even their Brethren: Therefore, let none think it strange, if some now under the



name of Quaker, yea such as account themselves THE CHRISTIAN QUAKER, are found in that which is wrong; neither let any think it strange if there be some from among us that are unruly, for there were such among the Primitive Believers, whom the Apostle exhorted the Christians to warn, see 1 *Thess.* 5. 14. yea, there was also a falling away, see, 2 *Thess.* 2. And the Apostle saith, 1 *Cor.* 11. 18, 19. *I hear there be Divisions among you, and I partly believe it, for there must be Heresies among you, and the Reason he gives is, That they which are Approved may be made manifest among you.*

So to that divine Light that lighteth every man, are we willing to bring our Deeds, knowing that what is reprov'd is made manifest by the Light, in which our Desires are, that all may have their minds exercised, that so they may have a true Discerning, and right Judgment in these and all things, and may not be stumbled at what of this kind hath or may happen, but may live and walk in that Light where no occasion of stumbling is.

For had those of whom we complain, walked in this Light, they had kept in the Unity of the Spirit of Truth, and in the Fellowship of the Gospel of Peace, and Saints in Light, and had not given offence to Jew, or Gentile, or the Church of Christ.

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Ben.

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*Benjamin Cole,*

**I** Have received thy Paper given (as thou sayest) as Reasons why the Meeting-House Doors were shut up; which for my part I look upon as no good or sufficient Reasons at all, neither can any good or sufficient reason be giving for us (or indeed for a any people) to take away or detain one anothers Rights from them, or to do one another any Wrong or Injury, which is wholly out of the way, and inconsistent with the Truth which leads to overcome Evil with Good, and such who walk in the path of it, their Weapons are not Carnal, but Spiritual, and can do no violence to any mans Person, State or Interest, neither forcibly or unjustly detain either of them, which are the effects of the Carnal, and not the Spiritual.

And now as to thy *first* pretended Reason, whereas thou sayest, *you could not enjoy peaceable Society, &c.* I say, your rising up against your Brethren, and justifying and spreading the Scurrillous, Clamorous, False, Scoffing, Unsavory and Pernitious Books, of *William Rogers, Thomas Crisp* and *Francis Bugg*, who joyned together, and published their Books to the World, endeavouring to stir up Persecution, and to set Professors and Profane, as far as they could, atop of us; to tread us down (which might be, together with some things within your selves of like nature) could not but break the Society or Fellowship betwixt you and them. And so I know they have born against you in their Testimonies, and so have you against them, which if this be th: Opposition, they may likewise say, that *Tho. Curtis* & you did oppose them; Though I am satisfied,

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that

that if they had been in the possession of it (as it should seem you were) they would have abhorred to have shut you out of the House, though I see not but that they might as justly and as honestly have done it, as what you have done, their right being as real and as just as yours, though its probable not so much.

II. *That the Worship of God is to be performed with Seriousness, &c.* is not denyed, but if you could charge any of them with being light, and not serious, and out of love in their service, such after due admonition are to be left to the Lord to deal with; and not to take away or keep them out of their rights, that is not the way to make them Serious, or to bring them into Love, but rather to harden them; and indeed its too manifest that you are but talkers of Love and Charity, which beareth all things, and thinketh no Evil, that are so full of Jealousies and evil furnisings against so many ancient, serviceable and honest Friends; and do not all those clamorous scandalous Books, spread about the Country by you, tend to bring Friends into Confusion, and set them one against another; and now keeping your Brethren out of their Propriety; these are the effects of Strife and Envy on your parts, and answers that Scripture which thou hast made use of, *Where Envying and Strife is, there is Confusion and every evil Work.*

III. *Though where Contention is, and a Meeting divided, cannot be profitable, &c.* I say such who hold the Truth in the love of it, will bear and suffer till the Lord make the decision, which your contrary unfruitful work of fastening up the Meeting-House Doors against your Brethren sufficiently shewes (to any that are in any true measure of it) that you are too far out of it.

IV. I doubt not but when the House was built *Tho. Curtis* and they were in one mind, and unanimous in building of it, and to good ends, for the Service of God to be performed in, and not for Strife, which I could wish your were clear of your selves, though you would altogether charge it on them, though the effects manifest too much the contrary, and though the end hath been too often perverted for which it was built, and therefore thou sayest, *its not reasonable it should be continued*; Then it should be with consent of both Parties, seeing both are concerned in it; but if it be therefore reasonable for one Party to take it away from the other, then such who are the perverters of it may take it away from the most innocent, and most likely so to do; for be sure, such as keep in the innocent Truth cannot do any such thing, its nature being to lead otherwise, into Patience, Quierness and Contentedness of Mind, committing their Cause to him that judgeth righteously.

And as for *Tho. Curtis* his standing engaged for the House, its no ground at all for him or you to take it away, or keep your Brethren out of that wherein they have a right, he might have let it alone when it was forth of his hands; and since, I doubt not, but upon reasonable terms he may be clear of that danger, if there be any.

V. The endeavouring to have innocent Women keep their Meeting in so fitting a place for them to do and perform those things that God hath concerned them in, is no reason, nor part of any reason for you to take it away, I think no understanding man can judge so; and for Friends keeping on their Hats when you have Prayed, when they have no Unity with you, nor you with them, is like the other; and it had been better, and more fairer dealing for you to have kept yours on, when they Prayed (and so have signified to your Brethren that

you had no Unity with them) then to put them off, and afterwards call them *Image-makers, setters up of Idols and Rools* publishing them *Apostates, Popishly Principled*, and such like, to the World.

VI. As for your endeavouring for Peace; I have heard them say as much, and that they have had cross and abusive Language from you, and in this case the Lord who knows both your hearts, is to make the decision as aforesaid, and such who are of him, can trust him till that time.

VII. *When no accommodation nor reasonable satisfaction can be had, and persons will not agree, except others will submit to their wills, or give them the House, &c.* Your taking of it away shews you to be too much in your wills. And I do not believe that they did seek or desire that you should give them the House, for they have offered to give you your Money that you laid out for it, as far as reasonable, which also shews that they have not in that refused to make a bargain with you; though in something, or things of another nature, they might refuse to bargain with you, and if you think it reasonable that they should take their Money, or otherwise you may keep it wholly from them, then is it not as reasonable that you should take your Money from them, and most reasonable, for they were contented it should have been continued as it was, and you were the dissatisfied Persons; and seeing you call your selves the *Christian Quakers*, and us *Apostates*, how do you herein answer the Doctrine of Christ? who saith, *Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do ye the same unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets*, which if you are short of, before you are short of him; and so I think understanding men will not judge, that because you are pleased to leave off to meet in the House, that therefore you should keep them out, nor yet because you are  
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the greatest Proprietors, that therefore you may justly take away the lesser Right, and so you have great reason to fear you should be counted Persecutors, whatever thou sayest. And how it can be said that any have no right in it, that it was given and settled upon by Act and Deed for a publick House to meet in? for my part I cannot see, nor yet for any after such gift and settlement, how they can justly take it away or detain it from them.

VIII. *That they have another Meeting-Place, or Place to Meet in, &c.* I know no other, but what they have by permission from the Owner. But if they had an other publick Meeting-House wherein several of them were concerned as Proprietors that's no reason for you to take away their right in that, and that they meet on purpose to oppose and disquiet you, I do not in the least believe, nor that their practice did at all manifest it; being fully satisfied that they are not persons of such unruly Spirits, but if they were such as thou art pleased to render them, as some such have been amongst us, as *Temperance Taylor* in your Town, and many at *London*, and other parts, yet it was never Friends way, who abode in the Truth, to deal in that nature, or after that manner with them; but to stand over them, and judge them down in Gods Authority, and also patiently to bear and suffer when the Lord should please to exercise them under their Spirits, who hath pleaded with many of them, and will in his time with all others that are of their Spirit: And if any through these things, that are fallen out among you, are gone back to the Steeple House, that is not the way to bring them back again (or at least to the Truth) for you to do such unreasonable things, as aforesaid, which are so contrary to the Truth.

IX. By thy last it seems, *That the Doors were shut up by consent,*

sent, and concluded on by several of you. Then it was not wholly *T. Curtis* his act, though I cannot see but it must needs be contrary to his Act and Deed to the Trustees, of which I know not how you will clear him of the breach of that Covenant, who as I am informed made it over by a Deed of Uses to four Friends, for a publick Meeting-House, for the People called Quakers at *Reading*, and thereabouts, and though three of them did unworthily relinquish their Trust, yet *William Lambolt*, who was one of them refused so to do: So what was done in relation to that must needs stand effectual to him, and what you have done in taking it away, must needs be contrary to that Engagement, several of them, with himself, being by you shut out of Doors, and cannot have the benefit to keep their Meeting in it accordingly, and for which end several of them gave considerable sums of Money; sure such dealings would have been abhorred by you many years since the beginning, which you are very forward to talk of, but too far degenerated from.

And now *Benjamin*, one of my ancient Acquaintance in that place, what shall I say unto thee, or what could I not do if the ancient Love and Society among you in that place may be again revived? surely it cannot be as things stands, and therefore I could wish that a deep and narrow search may pass through every heart that is concerned among you. And now as things stands you have outwardly separated your selves from your Brethren (indeed an inward Separation was before) and you have left the Meeting-House, and keep them out also; I desire thee, and all of you to be like men, and let true reason have place in you, and let them in again, wherein they have a right and propriety, and let not breach of Covenant rest upon your ancient friend *Tho. Curtis*, nor injustice nor wrong doing upon any of you. Or if you would not be counted Persecutors, nor examples to Persecutors, I say let them meet in the House again

again, and not keep them forth any longer ; for though you are the greatest Proprietors, yet they have a considerable share in it, sufficient to answer the use of the Meeting-Room twice or three times a Week, and you also may meet or forbear as you please ; & for that which thou livest in, and the rest of the Buildings belonging to it, you may do as in reason shall be seen meet. And sure what I here offer is according to that true and right reason that God hath endued me with, and I doubt not but will answer Gods witnesses in all unbyassed Friends, and innocent wel-wishing People, and I can truly say is in love to thee, and all of you. And is from your wel-wishing Friend.

James Potter.

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Page 3. Line 25. for *go to them*, read, *go to some of them*. Page 7. line 14. dele *not*. page 7. l. 32. for *defraud*, r. *defrauded*. p. 8. l. 11. for *maniest*, r. *manifest*.

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THE END.